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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides detailed, step-by-step advice on how to organize and conduct a successful teacher fair, which is a way to reach and teach the community about what is really happening in the schools. A teacher fair held in May 1981 is described to illustrate the general events that take place, i.e.: (1) actual teaching demonstration in a mock classroom; (2) teams of area high school students competing in a "Quiz Bowl"; (3) separate area devoted to vocational-technical opportunities; (4) displays of student work; (5) staff exhibits; and (6) student performances (orchestras, bands, etc.). An outline is provided describing the activities and events offered at teacher fairs and the specific planning that is necessary to make them successful. A suggested schedule of decision making, delegation of authority, fund raising, and publicity is presented which encompasses a full year of planning for the event. Methods for evaluating the fair are also discussed. (JD)

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FASTBACK

204

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Teacher Fairs: Counterpoint to Criticism

Sara Ingrassia, Sue Foley

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Series Editor, Derek L. Burleson

Teacher Fairs: Counterpoint to Criticism

by
Sara Ingrassia
and
Sue Foley

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Teacher fairs, the subject of this fastback, celebrate the successes of our public schools. It is the chapter's constant goal to encourage and support that which contributes to those successes. Therefore, the chapter sponsors this fastback in celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of its founding in 1969.

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What Is a Teacher Fair?

Public education begins and ends with the public. A teacher fair is an excellent way to reach and teach the community about what is really happening in its schools.

Envision a two-story shopping mall, stretching two city blocks, stimulating the enthusiasm of people interested in education — and attracting the notice of those who aren't. Under one roof a whole district is presented in microcosm including:

- actual teaching demonstrations in a mock classroom, e.g., a math lesson for fifth-graders, the use of the inquiry approach in eighth-grade science, a batik lesson for special education students
- teams of area high school students competing in a Quiz Bowl with questions based on the 9-12 curriculum
- a separate area devoted to vocation-technical opportunities in cooking, auto repair, child care, drafting, nursing
- displays of student work such as research papers, fiction and poetry, yearbooks, sculpture, industrial arts and home economics projects, and history and science projects
- staff exhibits on alternative programs, special education, libraries, adult education, bilingual programs
- non-stop student performances by orchestras, jazz bands, choirs, drama groups

Have you got the picture? Pride emanates from teachers, students, parents, and the community itself as the best of the district is spotlighted in the public marketplace. Excitement and enthusiasm for support of the schools is generated in the community.

The preceding is a description of the sights, sounds, and feelings of the Rockford Teacher Fairs in May 1981. They were the teachers' response to demoralizing and often unfair criticism of the public schools, of classroom techniques and capabilities. The fairs were their way of showing the public that teachers do teach and that students do learn.

Students from the Eisenhower Middle School videotape their classmates during a mock trial as part of the law focus education demonstration.

Why a Teacher Fair?

Teachers themselves can counter the unfair criticism of their schools and accomplish other positive goals at the same time, such as generating support for the schools among community members who normally have little contact with public education. Conducting a teacher fair is a dramatic and effective way of influencing the public's perceptions of their schools.

Take the following 60-second questionnaire and assess your feelings by marking *yes* or *no*:

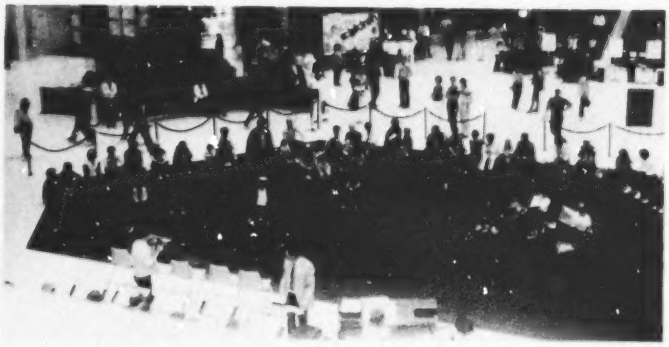
Part I: The Bad News Is . . .	*yes*	*no*
1. Have you heard a lot of discouraging words about public education and teachers in general?	___	___
2. Do you feel teachers are assaulted by the uninformed who see incompetency and inadequacy on every blackboard?	___	___
3. Do you believe the worst teachers get the most public attention and that dedicated staff get the least?	___	___
4. Is your classroom effectiveness hampered by demoralizing criticism of teachers as a group?	___	___
5. Is there any way to diminish negative attitudes toward public education and its teachers?	___	___

If you answered *yes* to the above, move on to Part II. If you answered *no*, stop and read no further. If teachers in your area face none of these problems, then your school district obviously doesn't need a fair.

Part II: Do You Need a Way To . . .

	yes	*no*
1. Respond to criticism in the media and elsewhere?	___	___
2. Boost the morale of teachers and staff?	___	___
3. Provide the public as well as the staff an opportunity to view the K-12 education system as a whole?	___	___
4. Showcase the wide variety of services and programs offered by the public schools?	___	___
5. Demonstrate to taxpayers (especially those without children in the public schools) how their money is spent?	___	___
6. Show the results of good teaching?	___	___
7. Spotlight academic competencies and gain recognition for students?	___	___
8. Generate a heightened respect for teachers' ability to organize for an educational purpose?	___	___

If you answered *yes* on more than half of the questions above, then a teacher fair may provide the opportunities you need.



The audience gathers at the large stage area for a school jazz band performance under the direction of Allen Nevaleinen.

Who Can Put On a Teacher Fair?

Any size teachers association or any size school district can organize a teacher fair. The goal is to exhibit and demonstrate, as vividly as possible, all that you have to offer the community's students. If your teachers organization is small, you may want to consider the possibility of joining other local professional associations or a nearby school district in a cooperative venture. If your school district is large, you may want to spotlight elementary schools one year and secondary schools the next year. Or you may want to limit the participants to classroom teachers and their students. You may even want to arrange to use several fair sites on the same weekend.

Whatever the size of your organization, THINK BIG! You want your audience to walk away overwhelmed with the quantity of what you have to offer as well as with the excellence of its quality. And you do have a lot to offer that is excellent. You may have to convince your teachers of that, especially if they haven't had many pats on the back lately.

When Should You Hold a Fair?

At first glance, American Education Week would seem the most appropriate time to hold a teacher fair, but it comes in November. We have found that many teachers are not ready to commit themselves or their students to demonstrations or performances so early in the year. Also, it is hard to find an excellent collection of projects to display.

Spring is a more hectic time for teachers, but developed talents, skills, projects, and papers abound. Mother's Day weekend (the second weekend in May) has been successful for us.

Study your calendars, both civic and school, before you settle on a date. Most big events are scheduled a year in advance. Annual big events in your community usually come at the same time each year. Get as much information as possible on all upcoming events, both for your school and in your community, before you set your date.

To make certain that your fair is successful, you should begin to organize and plan about one year before the teacher fair is to be held. A suggested schedule for organizing and carrying out tasks follows.

Suggested Schedule for Organizing a Teacher Fair

A Year Before (May-June)

Decide to do it — and do it big!

Appoint a strong steering committee — people who can organize, follow through, and remain amiable.

Choose a manager with strong leadership skills who is respected by teachers and district administrators.

Choose date and site, and sign up early to ensure a reservation.

Brainstorm: What projects, classes, and accomplishments do you want to show the public?

8-9 Months Before (Aug.-Sept.)

Talk with your district superintendent and regional superintendent about co-sponsorship.
Estimate budget.
Set up steering committee calendar of meetings.
Determine steering committee duties.

Assessment Time I

- How much money do you have?
- What resources have been promised by:
  a. local association?
  b. state association?
  c. school district?
  d. regional district?
  e. others?
- If you have enough support, proceed. If not, consider the options (Remember, you will need equipment as well as financial aid and help with public relations):
  a. Scale down plans to fit the resources you do have.
  b. Look for alternative sources of support such as:
     industry and business
     chamber of commerce
     local public college
     adult education organizations
     women's organizations
     service clubs
     YMCA/YWCA
     professional organizations
     city-county government
     community social-recreational centers
  c. Give up. Call it off for this year. (Be sure to let everyone know.)

7 Months Before (Oct.)

Prepare master plan for publicizing fair to the teaching staff in order to sign them up to participate.

Inform and inspire building representatives at a large group meeting so that they will do the same in their buildings.

Inform and inspire teachers by talking directly with them at faculty meetings.

Put a story into every newsletter published at building or district level and send out special fliers on the fair to each teacher in each school.

Inform teachers about any projects that will require long-range planning. Such projects include academic team competitions; fashion shows; art collections; creative and research writings; and history, science, and industrial arts projects.

6 Months Before (Nov.)

Appoint subcommittee chairpersons. Hold a meeting to spell out duties clearly and completely.

Meet with the site management where you plan to hold your teacher fair.

5 Months Before (Dec.)

Announce January sign-up meetings in all internal publications and send a special flier to teachers.

Ask building representatives to encourage participation.

Contact personally the "best" the district has to offer. Post cards, phone calls, and classroom visits are effective means to contact these persons.

Include a tear-off form on the flier for people who cannot attend meetings but who still want to be involved.

Consider meeting with retired teachers to involve them in the fair.

4 Months Before (Jan.)

Hold a series of after-school meetings at centrally located schools to sign

up participants. Build enthusiasm. Be ready to answer questions, motivate, and inspire.

Design the sign-up form carefully. Have a plan for handling the paper work.

Set a cut-off date for sign-up — and stick to it.

Assessment Time II

- How many teachers have signed up?
- Elementary? ____ Secondary? ____
- How many exhibits? ____
- Performances? ____
- Classroom demonstrations? ____
- A-V Little Theatre? ____
- Which groups or disciplines are under-represented?
- If you have enough to adequately fill up the time and space, move on. If not, take a look at your options (Remember: many teachers don't think they have anything "special" to offer. You have to convince them that they do.):
  a. Actively seek participants to fill in gaps.
  b. Give up. Call it off for lack of interest.

Decide if other community organizations or commercial concerns should be included. This should be a steering committee policy with agreement by the teachers association.

Make plans for the teachers association exhibit.

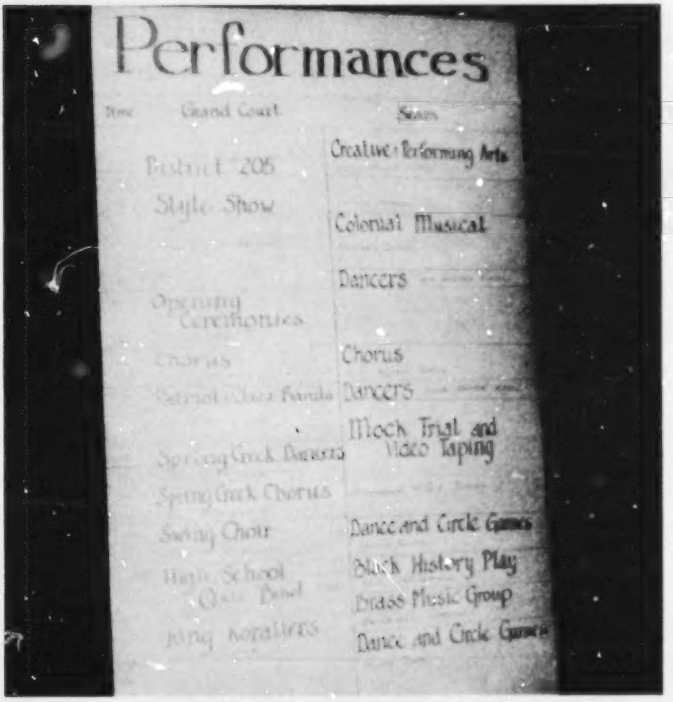
Plan an A-V Expo featuring teacher-made films, slides, plus outstanding commercial films.

Decide, in conjunction with the teacher association, those speakers and guests to be invited to the opening ceremony.

Consider selling T-shirts, bumper stickers, posters, etc. Money raised might be used for scholarships, fellowships, or fair expenses. However, check site policy *before* you arrange to sell anything.

3 Months Before (Feb.)

Plan for printing a teacher fair program.
Establish criteria for selecting participants if you have an overabundance of volunteers.
Send thank-yous to those not accepted.
Send a confirmation letter to all who have been accepted.
Meet with district and regional people to consolidate publicity plans.
Arrange for rental of any material you will need. For example, backdrop curtains and display panels.



A schedule of performances is placed at the entrance to the teacher fair.

2 Months Before (Mar.)

Develop a logistics master plan: assess material needs, work with the district maintenance department to locate materials, clear with building principals, and schedule pick-up and return.

Schedule all events: performances, demonstrations, competitions. Construct a master schedule.

Assign space to all exhibitors and booths. Put on the master schedule.

Send letters to all participants stating scheduling information, set-up and take-down requirements, etc.

Recruit additional muscle power through letters, fliers, building representatives. Schedule workers and inform them of their time and duties. Put this on the master schedule.

1 Month Before (Apr.)

Put publicity campaign into operation.

Distribute posters to schools announcing the dates and times of the fair, as well as participants from each building.

Make ID badges for the exhibitors, steering committee, and other personnel.

Check out the necessity of student insurance and field trip forms.

It is vital that you arrange for release time for the fair manager (possibly others) for both the set-up day and the day after the fair.

Prepare certificates of participation to be distributed from the control center during the fair.

Make signs for booths, classroom demonstrations, performance areas, etc. Whenever possible, include the teacher's name, grade, and school.

Telephone exhibitors to double-check arrangements. This is tedious, but it is necessary for a smooth set-up.

2 Weeks Before

Send a final letter to all participants.

Continue publicity campaign. Send news releases and make personal appearances on local talk shows. We have found that it is very difficult to get publicity before the fair actually occurs, but keep at it.

5 Days Before

Begin to pick up materials and transport them to the site (if storage is available).

Meet all contact people for site maintenance and security.

Check all materials against a master inventory sheet and keep an accurate count of extension cords, chairs, etc., and know where everything comes from. Masking-tape labels are a big help.

Set-up Day

Manager and volunteers mark out locations for booths and displays. Masking tape on the floors works well.

Establish a control center. Have extra supplies, master schedules, and steering committee personnel on hand.

Provide an information packet for each chairperson and coordinator. This packet should include a floor plan with major areas designated, instructions on how and when to contact security/maintenance, a master schedule, the names of coordinators in each area, and extra evaluation forms.

Register all volunteers and participants at the control center. Volunteers and participants should receive badges, evaluation forms, and certificates of participation. They should sign in by area (e.g., demonstrator, exhibitor, performer).

Designate a storage area. Always have official personnel on hand to keep track of checking material in and out.

Store posters in confined areas.

During the Fair

Issue press releases.

Have enough people at the control center to register people as well as to help with emergencies.

Assign several people to record a head count of crowds at certain times and for certain events.

Walk around every hour and check on how things are going. Collect evaluation sheets, gather comments, observe the crowds.

Take-Down

Be sure all material is inventoried as it is returned.
Check and note all damages. Report them to the fair manager.

The Day After

Supervise the loading of materials to be returned to schools.
Be sure all site material has been returned.

The Week After

Take care of any losses or damages immediately.
Send thank-you notes to special guests; custodial staff; and site, district, and regional management.
Send a collective thank-you note to all staff and student participants either in a flier to the schools or an article in the teachers association publication.
Write a letter to the editor thanking the community for its support.
Evaluate carefully.
Prepare a summary report for the teachers association, the district, and the media.

Where Should You Hold a Fair?

You must take your fair to the public. Don't expect the public to come to your schools. Remember that a teacher fair is the entire school system on display; and to display your school system successfully, you must locate your fair in a market place that has plenty of space, has plenty of parking, is easy to find, and has no (or low) rent.

An enclosed shopping mall is your best bet in most climates. But if that is not available, consider an open shopping mall, an armory, the YMCA or YWCA gyms, or a park.

Remember to check the site's liability insurance requirements before you commit your association to a particular place. That is, what is the financial responsibility if a student or a teacher — or anyone else, for that matter — is injured in some activity that is part of the fair?

Organize a Steering Committee

Let all things be done decently and in order.
I Corinthians

Nothing is more important for a successful fair than strong leadership. Each member of the steering committee must have the ability to organize, to evaluate, and to get along with people. They need enthusiasm and optimism. And they need to believe in the fair.

Putting on a teacher fair can be a hectic and sometimes frustrating activity. People are needed who can work calmly and carefully, who will not hesitate to telephone teachers or administrators when there is a conflict or a communication problem. You need people who can *adapt* creatively and diplomatically to unforeseen complications, e.g., when the band featured in the opening ceremonies cancels.

The manager for the steering committee should have all the above skills plus a very good relationship with the district administration. For a successful fair, the committee will need to work hand in glove with the district, and a manager who has credibility with the superintendent is vital.

The first job of the steering committee is to hold a brain-storming session. Put up some big sheets of newsprint, give someone a marker, and brainstorm *all* the responses to the following items:

- What projects, classes, and accomplishments do you want to show the public?
- What are the things and who are the people that the district teachers are most proud of?

- Are there any unique and unusual teacher classroom projects?
- What activities will attract people with no school-age children or disgruntled taxpayers who haven't been in a school for years?
- What other education organizations or support groups might be invited to participate?

Evaluate each suggestion carefully. Make your decisions. Then determine the responsibilities of each member of the steering committee. Put each individual assignment in writing — clearly and completely. Steering committee positions and responsibilities that we have found to work well include:

Manager

- Needs to have a thorough overview of the entire plan. Talks with site management, district management, and news media.
- Runs all steering committee meetings and is the contact for all chairpersons and sub-chairs.
- Is available all day for set-up day, during the fair, at take-down time, and for the day after the fair.
- Runs evaluation meetings after the fair, oversees the restitution of any damages incurred to materials, and supervises thank-you notes.

Teaching Demonstrations — elementary

- Collates pertinent information from sign-up sheets.
- Schedules time for each demonstration.
- Plans the model classroom and lists all needed equipment.
- Is on hand during the fair to assist teachers.
- Is responsible for all communications, written and oral, with demonstrators.

Teaching Demonstrations — secondary

- Collates pertinent information from sign-up sheets.
- Schedules time for each performance.
- Plans stage areas and lists all needed equipment.
- Assists performers during the fair.
- Is responsible for all communications, written and oral, with performers.

Exhibitions and Displays

- Collates all pertinent information from sign-up sheets.
- Assigns appropriate space for each exhibit and display, paying particular attention to electrical hook-ups, noise level, and size of exhibit area.
- Charts all needed equipment and helps exhibitors locate what is needed.
- Assists exhibitors during the fair in both putting up exhibitions and in taking them down.
- Is responsible for all communications, written and oral, with exhibitors.

Public Relations (internal)

- Responsible for creating fliers, posters, and news stories that will publicize the fair to the district's teachers.

Sue Foley conducts a classroom demonstration with students from Wilson Middle School.

Public Relations (external)

- Responsible for overseeing a small committee that will prepare a publicity campaign to begin one month before the fair.
- Each committee member should be responsible for one area: radio, television, or newspaper.
- Coordinates with the fair photographer and makes sure that good black-and-white photos as well as color prints and slides are taken.
- Coordinates with the district public relations person; this person usually has contacts with media people and can be of help in setting up talk show dates, etc.

Security

- Responsible for system for "protecting" displays, etc.
- Recruits people to "walk the site" during the fair.
- Talks with site security/maintenance personnel to determine how to handle serious problems.
- Hands out and retrieves district materials during set-up and take-down.
- Notes all damages, losses, etc., and reports these to the manager immediately.

Logistics

- Arranges with district personnel for locating, picking up, and transporting all district materials being borrowed for the fair.
- Keeps an accurate inventory of what has been taken from where.
- Works with security in handing out, retrieving, and keeping track of all materials borrowed from the district and the site management.

Opening Ceremony

- Responsible for planning an impressive opening ceremony on the first day of the fair.
- Contacts all speakers, performers, and guests.
- Sends thank-you notes afterward.
- Keeps publicity committee informed, especially if there will be prominent people involved in the ceremony.

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Audiovisual Coordinator

- Responsible for locating all needed AV equipment, spare bulbs, extension cords, etc.
- Should be able to handle all equipment efficiently.
- Works with security and logistics personnel to keep track of handing out and retrieving equipment.

Graphics

- Designs logo in cooperation with publicity committee.
- Designs and makes fliers, posters, brochures, etc.
- Designs banner to hang at the site announcing the theme of the fair, as well as identifying sponsors.
- Makes master schedules and posters for the performance and demonstration sites and for the main entrances to the site.

In addition to the steering committee members, you will probably find it necessary to appoint some subcommittee chairpersons who will report directly to the manager or to one of the steering committee members. We found it necessary to appoint a number of coordinators to be responsible for collecting, displaying, and returning special materials, including a student art coordinator, a science projects coordinator, a history projects coordinator, and a creative writing coordinator.

In addition, we appointed coordinators from some of the special departments in our district. These coordinators were responsible for contacting and signing up teachers in their respective areas and in acting as liaison between their departments and the steering committee. Coordinators for some special departments that you will want to consider include a special education coordinator, funded programs coordinator (bilingual, Chapter I, gifted), vocational-technical education coordinator, librarians coordinator, nurses coordinator, and adult education coordinator. Finally, there should be someone appointed to be in charge of planning and putting up the teachers association booth in which the teacher leadership can be spotlighted.

Planning for Special Events

Special events such as classroom demonstrations, musical performances, dramatic presentations, and academic competitions will dramatically illustrate what is happening in your schools. However, without careful planning, these events may not be as impressive as they could be. For example, a poor sound system or noise from other events can be frustrating for both the audience and the performers. When planning a teacher fair, you should thoroughly check both the sites at which the special events will be held and the equipment that will be used. This chapter will provide specific guidelines for ensuring that some easily avoided problems do not occur.

Classroom Demonstrations

- Make them as close to the real thing as possible. You will need desks and chairs; a chalkboard, chalk, and erasers; AV equipment and hookups; screens; a demonstration table; and a display board.
- Keep them secluded from noisier areas, especially performing areas.
- Place an easel nearby with posters announcing the name of the teacher, the school, the grade level, and the title of lesson.
- Post a schedule for the whole day so the audience can read the variety of classes even if they can't be there to see them in action.
- Have a few extra chairs for older persons in the audience.
- Have an elementary and a secondary classroom. Schedule a variety of grade levels and disciplines.
- Encourage teachers to do real lessons, using materials and strategies from their actual classroom experience.

- Encourage lively lessons with a lot of student participation. Remember, you want the observers to enter vicariously into the lesson with the students.
- Encourage visual aids, writing on the chalkboard, etc., so everyone knows what is going on.
- Allow 30 minutes or less for elementary teachers.
- Allow 45 minutes or less for high school teachers.
- For a chemistry magic show, find a daring high school chemistry teacher with advanced chemistry students. Encourage flashy chemical reactions for the core of the show, but consider safety regulations and precautions.
- Provide handouts about your demonstration for the public.

Michael Hunt, a third-grade student from the Bloom Elementary School, explains his science project to Debbie Chostner, a parent visiting the fair.

Large Group Performing Area

- Check the acoustics.
- Provide a raised stage, PA system, chairs, music stands, risers, and, if possible, a piano.
- Be sure there is room to accommodate a large audience. Seating is nice, but not necessary.
- Place a schedule for the entire day's performances in a prominent location.
- Use this area for large musical groups, a fashion show, magic show, physical education demonstrations, and academic competitions (if each team member can have a microphone).

Intimate Performing Area

- Provide a circular space that can be used as a theater-in-the-round. The audience will stand around the circle.
- Use this area for small musical groups, dramatic presentations, mime, poetry readings, and small dance demonstrations.
- Microphones should not be necessary in this area.

Academic Competitions

- The Quiz Bowl, debates, and spelling bees are held here. These events may be staged alternately with artistic performances on the big stage area.
- Provide tables, chairs, podium, chalkboard for score-keeping, and a PA system, if necessary.
- Use display curtains as a backdrop for the teams. They help block noise and help focus attention on the teams.
- Provide space for the audience.
- If you are going to hold a high school Quiz Bowl, you will need to find one or two coordinators who will write to high school principals to find out which schools are interested in participating, write to high school department heads asking their help in getting questions *with* answers, and call meetings for the coaches to plan the activity.

- Each school participating in the Quiz Bowl will need a coach who will advertise for interested students about six weeks in advance of the competition (encouragement by other staff members helps bring out more students); collect and organize questions in acceptable categories; and practice with the team several times, using the rules of the competition.
- Check with local educational TV to see if they will broadcast the finals.

Display and Exhibit Booths

- Use display panels with a surface to which papers and projects can be taped, stapled, or tacked. Check restrictions on their use if you are renting them from a commercial company.
- Use curtains for forming the sides of the booths. However, curtains are not adequate for exhibiting art work unless you can use pins.
- Cover tables with colorful paper.
- Place posters at each exhibit announcing school, grade level, and teachers.

Teachers Association Booth

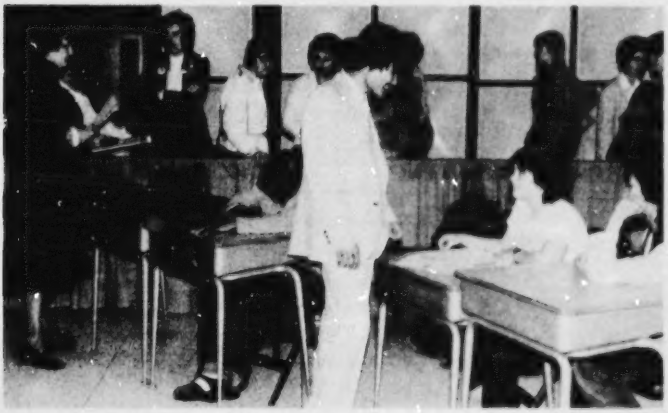
- Consider selling teacher buttons, bumper stickers, or T-shirts at your teachers association booth. (Check ads in *Learning* magazine for companies that produce these items; decide the feasibility of purchasing items on consignment or in bulk.)
- Hold a raffle with the winner(s) receiving books or a gift certificate from a mall merchant. Be sure to check local laws and/or regulations.
- Collect proceeds from the two activities above and donate toward a college scholarship for the son or daughter of a teacher, or a teacher fellowship for research or travel, with the stipulation that the teacher shares the experiences with district staff.
- Display pictures of the executive board and building representatives with their school and the subjects they teach.
- Provide a resource section on "How to Help Your Child. . ." List tutoring services offered by teacher association members, summer

school programs, public library reading programs, supplementary art classes, computer classes, and NEA parent brochures.

- Display pictures of the staff with the longest service in the district.
- Design an exhibit of staff active in civic affairs. List some of their activities.

Control Center

- Locate centrally; always have several steering committee members there as well as several workers.
- Use for signing in participants, assigning workers, keeping copies of all master schedules, handing out emergency supplies, trouble-shooting during set-up and take-down times, headquarters for manager, and providing certificates of participation.



Kathy Schimmoler and Phengphone Chathalangsy conduct a sixth-grade bilingual class at the Rockford Teachers Fair.

Publicity

Without publicity there can be no public support.
Disraeli

Publicity is an important part of any teacher fair. A master plan for publicizing the fair should be drawn up at least seven months before the fair is held, and the publicity campaign should be directed toward both the general public and the educators in your district.

When you first decide to hold a teacher fair, you should begin to enlist support. Publicize the proposed fair at inservice and building meetings and in the teachers association newsletter. You should send a flier to all teachers in the district explaining the purpose of the fair and listing the dates of the planning and sign-up meetings. You should also explain the fair to all building representatives and get a commitment from the president and executive board of your teachers association to urge attendance at the sign-up meetings.

You should invite other organizations to participate in the teacher fair. The local units of Phi Delta Kappa, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Council for the Social Studies, and other organizations, as well as local colleges and universities, should all be invited to participate in the fair.

A more intensive publicity campaign should begin about a month before the fair is held. News releases announcing the fair or describing special events that will be part of the fair should be sent to your local newspaper, radio stations, and television stations. These media will also be happy to list your fair on their community calendars. Be sure to compile statistics on the number of participants, events, etc., that will be

part of your fair, as well as general statistics from your district, to be used in your news releases. Also, a meeting with the editor of your local newspaper will be extremely helpful and should not be overlooked.

In addition to news releases, you should contact the local radio and television stations about appearing on talk shows. These stations are usually very interested in spotlighting local events, but they should be contacted several months in advance so they can fit you into their schedules.

Posters announcing the dates and times of the fair should be distributed to the schools, and space should be left on these posters for the school to list the participants from that school.

You will also want to print a program guide that lists the schedules and locations of the various events at the teacher fair. This program should include acknowledgements of sponsors and contributors, as well as the names of all volunteers, guests, participants, and categories of special awards. A vocational education class in your district might be enlisted to print the program, thus providing another example of what students are learning in your schools.

Rockford area high school students compete in a quiz bowl at the Rockford Teachers Fair.

Evaluating the Fair

Seek and ye shall find.
Matthew 7

Evaluation is a vital, though often overlooked, part of a teacher fair. An evaluation helps you to assess how successful the fair has been, and it will also help you to avoid repeating any mistakes the next time you organize a teacher fair. The participants, steering committee, subcommittees, and general public should all be involved in the evaluation.

One person should be assigned to compile the evaluation information. Data should be collected before, during, and after the fair. The person who is responsible for compiling this data should contact the organizing committees, participants, and teachers as soon as possible after the fair in order to collect the maximum number of comments and ideas while they are still fresh in everyone's memory.

Participant Evaluation

In addition to debriefing participants after the fair, short forms should be distributed to each participant at the start of the fair. These forms should allow the participants to note problems, positive outcomes, public attendance, and other information while the fair is in progress. The forms can be color coded by category, for example, by whether the participant is a performer, exhibitor, guest, or demonstrator.

Committee Evaluation

Members of the steering committee and various subcommittees should identify any problems that occurred in their areas before, during,

and after the fair. They should address the adequacy of the publicity campaign and scheduling; list outstanding performances, exhibits, and demonstrations, as well as those persons who were particularly helpful in running the fair; and note the degree of involvement of each school in the district. Below is a sample form that can be used for compiling data for the evaluations.

Compiler's Records — Summary of Important Facts at a Glance

Before the Fair

Totals: *Students:*
Elementary _____ Middle _____ High _____
Teachers:
Elementary _____ Middle _____ High _____
Total students (all levels)_____
Total teachers (all levels)_____
Administrators _____ Nurses _____ Others _____
Number of schools participating _____; % of district ____
Total exhibits ____ Elementary ____ Secondary ____
performances ____ Elementary ____ Secondary ____
demonstrations ____ Elementary ____ Secondary ____
Total number general volunteers _____
Put on a separate sheet of paper the names, positions, addresses of honored guests.

During the Fair

Quiz Bowl
Number of schools represented _____
Total number of students participating _____
Projects (Give number) art ____ science ____ history ____
writing ____ other _____
Mall's estimate of total traffic per day: date _____ # _____
date _____ # _____
Official count of people at different places at designated times

After the Fair

How many would participate again:
Yes _____ No _____ Depends _____
Total number of buildings in some way involved _____ % _____
List the buildings with the highest staff involvement: _____
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
List media that gave coverage: TV, newspapers, radio: _____
_____
_____
Approximate hours of involvement: average ____ total ____
Number of volunteers for:
set-up ____ take-down ____ security ____
Total cost to the Association: $ _____

Public Evaluation

The evaluation should definitely involve the public. Short written comments on what people think about the fair or what they like or dislike about the schools can be obtained from those who attend the fair. This can be done at the teachers association booth or it can be done by volunteers at various locations at the fair.

People attending the fair can also be asked to fill out a "district report card." This report card can be adapted from the "Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," which is published every September in the *Phi Delta Kappan*. The answers to these questions from those who attend your fair can be compared to the answers on the national survey, and the results can be used in a news release.

Another interesting way to involve the public in the evaluation is to have them take a test on a computer terminal. This test would let people attending the fair demonstrate their knowledge of the district's operations, services, and special programs. The results will not only help you to evaluate the public's knowledge of the schools but may also be instructive to those taking the test.

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Teacher Fair Checklist

He who has burned his mouth blows his soup — and advises others to do likewise.

German Proverb

The fair manager and steering committee assess these items. Some aspects are up to your own judgment; other points, if overlooked, can jeopardize the entire fair. At the beginning of each planning phase (before, during, and after the fair), the steering committee surveys this checklist. Fill out each section at the end of each phase to help assess progress.

Before the Fair

	Yes	*No*
1. The date set for the fair is critical.		
• Have you checked the district calendar for conflicting events?	___	___
• Are there conflicts with civic events?	___	___
• Does staff have adequate time to prepare their students' projects, demonstrations, etc.?	___	___
• Have you determined what the site management's restrictions are?	___	___
2. The steering committee is alive and well.		
• Are all members giving evidence of their involvement?	___	___
• Are all levels (senior, elementary) represented?	___	___
• Are a wide range of academic disciplines represented?	___	___
• Is the committee broadly based geographically?	___	___
• Have you enlisted coordinators for special areas?	___	___

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3. Hold onto the reins! Maintain teacher authority.
   - Do planning decisions rest with the teachers? ..... ___ ___
   - If the school district is participating, is its role clearly defined, e.g., sponsoring vs. cooperating? ..... ___ ___

4. Monitor responsibilities and follow through.
   - Does one person have charge of recording individuals' responsibilities, due dates? ..... ___ ___
   - Is the monitor giving frequent reports to the fair manager/steering committee? ..... ___ ___
   - Are people meeting their due dates? ..... ___ ___
   - Have committee chairs been appointed and given clear explanations of their tasks? ..... ___ ___
   - Are people invited to meetings that are germane to their responsibility? ..... ___ ___

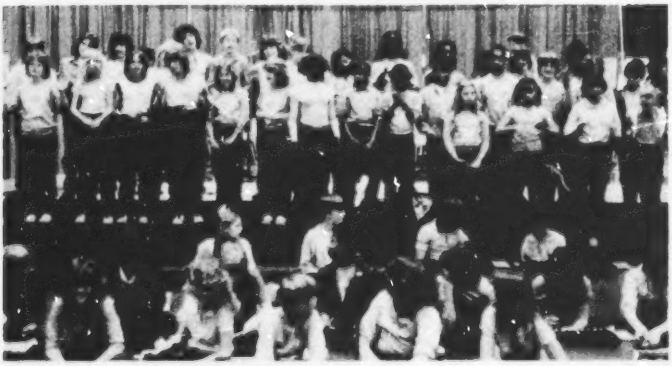
5. Set policies before reaching troubled waters.
   - Are groups/companies for profit allowed to participate? ..... ___ ___
   - May nonprofit civic/education organizations exhibit? ..... ___ ___
   - Have the steering committee's policy decisions been given to the teacher association president and the executive board? ..... ___ ___

6. Comfort to inner space.
   - Have you determined the best locations in the fair area? ..... ___ ___
   - Have you ascertained the best times for demonstrations and performances? ..... ___ ___
   - Have you decided how you will apply those determinations in assigning spaces and times? ..... ___ ___

7. Prevent sweat and tears with good forms.
   - Have you reminded participants not to bring their valuable possessions? (If the site provides lockers, provide that information ahead of time.) ..... ___ ___

- Have written directions to participants stated the "where's and how's"? ..... ___ ___
- Do performers know how long their performance is scheduled to last, including specified set-up time? ... ___ ___
- Have you mailed confirmation letters to participants' homes? ..... ___ ___
- Have you told exhibitors specifically what will/will not be provided? ..... ___ ___
- Have the above instructions been stated several times? ..... ___ ___
- Have workers to help set up and take down been recruited? ..... ___ ___
- Have *all* participants been invited to a party (if planned)? ..... ___ ___

8. Think ahead.
   - Has lighting at the site been considered? ..... ___ ___
   - Is the noise environment from each store taken into account? (music stores, electronic arcades) ..... ___ ___
   - Does the classroom demonstration area have adequate lighting, electrical outlets? ..... ___ ___



The King Choraliers from Martin Luther King Elementary School perform at the large stage area.

- Is the classroom demonstration area self-contained enough for student concentration? ..... ____ ____

9. Reach out.
   - Are teachers given several opportunities to apply? ... ____ ____

10. Think positively — only a tear has to fall.
    - Are mistakes taken in stride as inevitable and surmountable? ..... ____ ____

11. Arm to the teeth.
    - Is there a well-planned method to distribute materials? ..... ____ ____
    - Has an inventory list been made? ..... ____ ____
    - Are stepladders and other aids procurred? ..... ____ ____
    - Is there a written agreement with the district on liability of school equipment? ..... ____ ____

12. Cast a wide net!
    - Are special guests invited to the opening ceremony? ____ ____
    - Has the publicity committee completed several activities? ..... ____ ____

During the Fair

- Is the fair manager (and appropriate others) familiar with site security procedures? ..... ____ ____
- Are all necessary forms/items available at the control center? ..... ____ ____
  - ____Master lists, electrical outlet locations
  - ____Extra participant instruction sheets
  - ____Certificates of participation packaged for teachers with student certificates enclosed in large envelopes
  - ____Masking tape, markers, posterboard, etc.
  - ____Systematic check-in procedures
  - ____Evaluation forms
  - ____Updated statistics sheet for fair manager's press interviews

After the Fair

- Are evaluations tabulated? ..... ___ ___
- Have others seen the results of evaluations? ..... ___ ___
- Have several concluding publicity activities occurred? ..... ___ ___

Conclusions

The teacher fair is a positive and honest response to negative criticism of the schools. A teacher fair does not deny the weaknesses of public education. Instead, it provides on-the-spot, three-dimensional demonstrations of the strengths of public education. Even the most casual observer will not miss the energy, talent, and creativity of the teachers whose instructional efforts yield these displays. The public will sense the pride in accomplishment that hundreds of students feel as they show their work and their talents. A whole mall alive with education will generate a message that there are many successful things happening in public education.

The teacher fair is a morale booster for teachers, both for those who participate and for those who observe. Here the accomplishments of district classrooms are publicly displayed and acknowledged. In addition, the fair allows both teachers and the public to experience the education system as a whole, from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Finally, a teacher fair is a project on which teachers and administrators can cooperate positively, creatively, and enthusiastically. It is a celebration of the successes of public education.

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